

ARTICLE 2: Serving Students with Special Needs and Gifted and Talented

This Connecticut district ensures that students of all abilities succeed.

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In the article Serving Students with Special Needs and Gifted and Talented, the main emphasis is on the role that district superintendent Gary Richards has played in designing a plan and implementation that supports the goals identified by the district. In collaboration with the assistant superintendent, Richards worked to create 2010-2013 Wilton Public Schools Strategic Plan. This plan was designed to drive instruction and decision making. The plan's success is a direct result of the collaboration that has been successfully established between faculty, students, parents, administrators, and board of education and community members.

Superintendent Richards has been successful in successfully balancing the education of its most advanced learners as well as ones who need more help. Creating systems that support teachers in implementing differentiated strategies has helped with the success. In addition, there are supports for parents that includes meeting to ensure that initiatives and expectations for learning are shared.

Richards has been acknowledged as Superintendent of the year during 2013 for his leadership in creating and implementing Wilton's strategic plans. This district plan clearly outlined expectations and goals for students in all types of settings. Some of his strong points include implementing cutting-edge practices in curriculum, instruction, and assessment; use of technology; ability to garner support for the district from local town government and the community; and his special needs program, which focuses on students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Richards has been successful in getting parent on board with supporting their students.

A few core ideas that lead to superintendents success are maximizing community involvement in schools; maintaining high-quality faculty and staff; implementing curriculum and instruction best practices; ensuring the academic and social/emotional growth of students; using technology-based digital tools to support teaching and learning; and developing appropriate school budgets.

Richards also organized school-based Strategic Plan Progress Review Teams made up of community members, board members, parents, administrators, and teachers. As an influential school leader Richards ensures the integrity of his plan by ensuring that the plan is evaluated , reviewed, refreshed and renewed. This is a key point in ensuring that the plan does not become a piece of paper but instead remains a living document. As a superintendent who works with staff, parents and children he is able to serve the sub groups identified by the school and ensure that both special needs and G&T student groups are successful.